

REMARKS

No claim amendments are submitted in this Response. Claims 1, 3-6, 8-15, 17, 20, 24, and 25 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 3-6, 8-15, 20, 24, and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Sohnies (U.S. 3,607,741) in view of Rowell (EPO 213,252). Objections were raised to claim 17 for being dependent upon a rejected base claims, but claim 17 was indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form and to include all the limitations of the base claim 1. For more reasons more fully discussed below, it is believed that all of these rejections are overcome and their withdrawal is requested.

Claims 1, 3-6, 8-15, 20, 24, and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Sohnies in view of Rowell. Applicants respectfully suggest that Sohnies in combination with Rowell do not make the claimed invention obvious.

Filed concurrent with this Response is a Declaration of Mr. Richard Salisbury submitted under 35 USC 131. In his Declaration, Mr. Salisbury states the following:

- 1) Mr. Salisbury had difficulty in reproducing Sohnies material according to the published procedure.
- 2) When the Sohnies procedure was followed using paper pulp; the resulting material was hard and quite dense. The material sank within ten minutes when placed on the water. Some of the samples of the material did pick up close to 6.6 times their weight when placed directly on a continuous slick of oil. However as noted above, this material would not float on clean water for usefully long periods of time.
- 3) Material containing acetylated wood fiber prepared according the claimed invention was similarly tested and found to pick up 14 times its weight in oil even after floating on water for 18 hours before hand.
- 4) Material obtained from wood fiber (of the type employed in the present invention) treated according to the procedure of Sohnies was produced and tested. This material sank within five minutes when placed on clean water.

5) In contrast, material produced according to the claimed invention was found to float on clean water for at least 60 hours.

In light of the above and Mr. Salisbury's Declaration, it is believed that the presently claimed invention is non-obvious over the cited art. The claimed invention provides unexpected advantages over the art include significantly increased oil absorption and the ability to float on water for a useful period of time. This ability to float on water for long periods of time can be particularly helpful for oil recovery since the material can not always be placed directly on an oil slick, but may be required to float in and around oil slicks before coming in direct contact with the spilled oil.

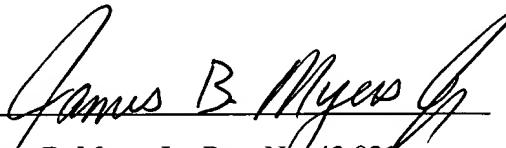
The undersigned attorney respectfully requests that the rejections over claims 1, 3-6, 8-15, 20, 24, and 25 be withdrawn over Sohnius (U.S. 3,607,741) in view of Rowell (EPO 213,252).

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing discussion, reconsideration, and withdrawal of all outstanding rejections, and allowance of this application containing claims 1, 3-6, 8-15, 17, 20, 24, and 25 are requested. In addition, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney if there are any questions about this submission and other formal matters, which might be addressed in that fashion to facilitate allowance of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

By:


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